

T H E  
INVESTIGATOR.

NUMBER CCCXXII.

*By Mr Ramsay.*

---

*To be continued Occasionally.*

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Ουδεν εν ανδροποισι διακριδον εστι νοημα,

Αλλ' ο συ θαυμαζοις τουθ' ετεροισι γελωσ.

LUCIAN.

— *inde autem, cum se matura levabit*

*Progenies stimulante fame, festinat ad illam*

*Quam primum rupto prædam gustaverat ovo.*

Juv. Sat. 14.



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THE  
GENTLEMEN  
OF THE

INVESTIGATOR  
NUMBER

Lord Mordaunt's Company  
Lord and Lady Mordaunt's  
and Colonel Mordaunt

Lord Mordaunt  
AND to your friend and  
A VIRGIL

Col. Mordaunt  
I do indeed, my Lord  
Lord Mordaunt  
the wife, my noble Colonel





T H E  
INVESTIGATOR.  
NUMBER CCCXXII.

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Lord MODISH'S Country-Seat.

*Lord and Lady Modish, Lady Harriot,  
and Colonel Freeman.*

*Lord Modish.*

**A**ND so you prefer HUDIBRAS to  
VIRGIL?

*Col. Freeman.*

I do indeed, my Lord.

*Lord Modish.*

But why, my noble Colonel?

*Col. Freeman.*

Because he gives me most pleasure.

*Lord Modish.*

Then allow me to tell you, George, you are with all your reading an absolute Goth, and have no manner of taste.

*Col. Freeman.*

So you told me last night, my Lord, when I preferred Canary to Champaign.

*Lord Modish.*

No doubt; for that was just such another instance of your Gothickness.

*Col. Freeman.*

I agree with your Lordship that the cases are very parallel, and for that reason I mention your last night's observation. The word *taste* originally belongs to the palate, and it is not amiss to have that always in view, when we suspect a misapplication of it in the way of metaphor. It is by taste, no doubt, that we are able to distinguish salt from sugar, and mustard from apple-pie; its proper office being upon all such occasions to inform us what is what. But allow me to ask your Lordship, why you said I had no taste in wine, when it was plain, by my preference of one of the bottles, that I could very well distinguish it from the rest.

*Lord*

*Lord Modish.*

You certainly now affect to misunderstand me. By saying you had no taste, I did not mean that you was not capable of distinguishing, but, according to the usual application of the phrase, that you had a bad taste, and preferred the worst.

*Col. Freeman.*

This is, my Lord, an application of the word *taste*, that, however usual, somewhat deviates from its original and proper sense. For, according to that, good taste can signify no more than a greater than ordinary accuracy in determining, in certain cases, that two separate things are of the same or of different kinds, and when of different kinds in assigning the proper name to each. Take a man so endowed into your cellar, and without seeing the labels, he will tell you not only that this hog'shead is Port and that Claret, but amongst the Clarets that this is of such a growth and such a year, that of such another. I am very sensible that your Lordship's application of the phrase is nevertheless usual: but if all the phrases that convey no distinct and uniform meaning were banished out of the world, we should be deprived, among the rest, of a great many that are very usual and fashionable. But, *a propos* of our last night's liquor, did you mean by the worst the least wholesome?

If so, I am afraid my taste can hardly be defended.

*Lord Modish.*

No, faith; I believe the Champaign is the worst of the two in that respect. No; I meant that which had the worst flavour.

*Col. Freeman.*

Then I suppose you think me insincere in my declaration of liking Canary.

*Lord Modish.*

I have known you too long, George, to lay insincerity to your charge. No; I make no doubt of your having really a very bad taste in your potations.

*Col. Freeman.*

You mean, then, I dare say, that it is not your taste.

*Lord Modish.*

No; nor of any of your acquaintance, I'll be sworn.

*Col. Freeman.*

So then the goodness or badness of one's taste is to be determined by the taste of the majority.

*Lord Modish.*

Certainly; and were it otherwise what confusion must ensue? for when men are to drink jovially together, it is highly reasonable that the  
few

few should yield in the choice of the liquor to the many.

*Col. Freeman.*

My Lord, I will allow your consequence : But what necessity is there for this society in drink, by which the conformity becomes necessary ? When soldiers are to attack the enemy, such an union must be absolutely necessary ; else one platoon might retire whilst another advanced. It is no less necessary where more pacific people are met to dance country dances ; else the man might be footing corners whilst his partner was figuring in. Unless all fight and dance with one accord, the purposes of fighting and dancing would be entirely frustrated. But there is nothing in the nature of drinking, that hinders it from being performed as effectually, and to as good purpose, by a single person, as by one that has thirty legions at his command. When you can make it appear that a man ought to take physic because his companion is sick, or to drink because he is dry, it may then appear reasonable in him to drink of a particular kind of liquor because his companions happen to be pleased with the flavour of it. An extraordinary stretch of complaisance, from which no person seems to reap any advantage. For my own part, I profess myself an entire friend to toleration and liberty of conscience, and think it little better than popery and the inquisition to compel any man to swallow what goes against his stomach,

on pretence of preserving unity in public drinking.

*Lord Modish.*

Thou art an odd fellow, George, that is certain.

*Col. Freeman.*

I am indeed, my Lord ; for I always deliver my own sentiments, and in my own words.

*Lord Modish.*

So then you reckon religion and drinking to be of the same nature. I think I have known you sometimes more lucky in your comparisons.

*Col. Freeman.*

I don't pretend, my Lord, that the parallel will hold in every respect ; but with regard to the subject of our present conversation they are certainly very much akin : being both matters of private concern and advantage only ; and, of course, the objects only of taste or private opinion. But when I speak of religion, I would be understood of what is speculative and ritual, and not at all of the moral duties : So when I speak of drinking, I mean drinking for pleasure, without taking any of its medicinal effects into consideration ; for as by these society may be affected, they are very properly the objects of general concern and enquiry.

*Lord*

*Lord Modish.*

Then you don't allow the moral duties to be the objects of taste. My Lord Shaftesbury is of a very different opinion!

*Col. Freeman.*

That may be; but his Lordship stands not for divine authority with me. I know, my Lord, that there has been much unfortunate pains employed, by many authors from Plato down to Sir Harry Beaumont, in order to confound the objects of judgment with those of taste and feeling; than which nothing can be more vulgar and unphilosophical.

*Lord Modish.*

I fancy it is not an easy matter to separate them; and, as I know you have turned your mind pretty much to such enquiries, I should be glad to know what touchstone you recommend for that purpose.

*Col. Freeman.*

It does not appear to me so difficult as it seems to those refined philosophers; and thus I distinguish them. Whatever has a rule or standard to which it may be referred, and is capable of comparison, is not the object of taste, but of reason and judgment. The proper objects of taste or feeling are such as are relative to the person only who is actuated by them, who is the sole judge whether those feelings be agreeable or otherwise; and being informed of this simple fact from himself, no farther consequence

quence can be drawn from it, neither does it admit of any dispute. Thus when a man tells me that venison eats better with currant than with gravy sauce, he only informs me of his private opinion concerning it. It admits of no reasoning, pro or con. There it must rest, and he must have the like patience to hear me, in my turn, declare that gravy sauce is far before currant; and this without making any reply, if he has a grain of sense. It is quite otherwise when either he or I assert that Westminster hall is longer than Westminster bridge, or that oak is specifically heavier than copper; for in each of those cases there is a standard to apply, to wit, a footrule in one case, and a pair of scales in the other, which entirely exclude opinion from having any share in the debate. With regard to one thing's being comparatively better than another, there is likewise a standard of another kind, which leaves the preference to be decided by the judgment; and that is the relation which such things bear to the use for which they are both supposed to be intended. As for instance, if it should become the subject of enquiry which of two swords is the best, the intention of fighting being supposed, the preference will be reasonably given to that which by its superior strength, lightness, sharpness, and perhaps length, is the fittest for fight. If for the same purpose the comparison happens between a sword and a pair of scissars, the preference will no doubt fall to the sword for very obvious reasons.

But

But vary the circumstances of the intended combat, and explain that it is not to be fought in a field, but in a post chaise or a centry box, and you will be obliged to rejudge the cause by a new standard, which will infallibly declare a pair of scissars to be a more fatal, and consequently a better, weapon than any Toledo in the world. It is possible, by thus supposing certain circumstances, to bring the most different and most remote objects in nature to be compared by a common standard; but where this is not provided, reason must be pleased to leave the bench, and refer the matter entirely to taste, or private inclination. It is that alone which can determine a young Lady in her choice between pink and blue, or between her Dancing-master, and the Sheriff of the County; and from such a sentence there lies no appeal. Having thus, as I think, fairly stated the different pretensions of judgment and taste, I will leave it to your Lordship to pronounce whether they are so like one another as to be easily mistaken.

*Lord Modish.*

In the way you have stated the affair there can be no difficulty, and the maxim, that *there is no disputing of tastes*, is one of those that are the most universally received.

*Col. Freeman.*

The maxim is, as you say, my Lord, in every body's mouth, but there are very few whose understandings are at all the better for it. I have, you know, in the course of my life,

life, mixed in a great variety of scenes, civil and military, and have made one in all sorts of companies, from her Grace's drawing-room to a Gravesend tilt-boat, but have ever found, at least, three fourths of the conversations, high and low, to be employed in each person's declaring his own taste and decrying that of his companions: a method of spending time which appeared to me so uninteresting, so unentertaining, so unprofitable, that it has contributed more than any thing else to the solitary and bookish life that I have led for some years past. Not but that I find, every now and then, some of my calf-skin companions who are guilty of the same egotisms, impertinently endeavouring to palm upon me their own opinions and those of their masters, instead of argument and matter of fact; but then I can more easily get rid of their company. I was last Sunday drinking tea at Lady Faddleton's, where unfortunately Miss Molly Bright happened to be mentioned as a beauty, and produced a dispute of an hour and a half, that made me sorry the holiness of the day did not suffer me to propose whist; for I think a total silence not so bad as so perverse an abuse of speech.

*Lady Harriot.*

And pray, Colonel, don't you think Miss Molly Bright handsome?

*Col.*

*Col. Freeman.*

Suppose, Madam, I should say yes; what would your Ladyship infer from my answer? Nothing more, I presume, than that she was handsome in my eyes. Were you desirous of knowing what she appeared in my Lord's, I fancy you would be under a necessity of putting the same question to him, just as if it had never been put to me.

*Lady Harriot.*

Then you think it is all fancy, and that there is nothing real in beauty.

*Col. Freeman.*

I have, Madam, too much reason to believe that there is something real in its effect, if you will accept of that as an answer.

*Lady Harriot.*

I am not philosopher enough to know whether it be an answer or not. But sure, Colonel, you must own there are some women whom all the world allows to be handsome.

*Col. Freeman.*

Your Ladyship seems to be more a philosopher than you are willing to acknowledge. You are endeavouring, I find, to withdraw female beauty from amongst the number of those things which are merely the objects of taste, by an appeal to a matter of fact, the general sentiments

timents of mankind. But I do not understand how that fact can be so ascertained as to become a safe foundation for any superstructure of reasoning.

*Lady Modish.*

Perhaps, Colonel, you do not allow there is such a thing neither as ugliness. Could you prove that point, there are some Ladies whom the whole town would think vastly beholden to you.

*Col. Freeman.*

The case of deformity is somewhat different, Madam, from that of beauty. Deformity may be subject to enquiry, and reducible to certain principles, altho' beauty should not. A face which has one eye larger than the other, which has the mouth awry, or one cheek fat and the other lean, is certainly deformed, and in this all men will agree. But it does not follow that the reverse of these will produce beauty. As to the agreement which Lady Harriot has observed with regard to the beauty of certain females, I believe it will not be difficult to account for it without allowing it to be real. As for instance, let us suppose that two or three of those worthies, who are by fate appointed to set fashions in our great city, should from amongst five thousand young women, equally free of deformity, pick out Miss Thingum, at random, and toast her upon all occasions for a burning beauty.

ty. What will be the consequence? Those who are an inch below them in fashionability, if you will allow me the word, will catch the sound, and convey it like the watch-word of a camp from the Generalissimo to the sentinel. The machine being once set in motion, there is nothing to obstruct its progress. The men of sense never tire other people with declaring their own tastes, and are equally unwilling to lose their time in disputing the tastes of others. Amongst the fools there is here and there one to be found, who will engage in the wise controversy, and will say, *Indeed I don't see any thing so superlatively handsome in Miss Thingum, that there should be all this rout made about her*; but the greatest part of them are such poltroons as to be afraid of opposing the prevailing cry for fear of shewing their ignorance, always supposing beauty to be a science which it is incumbent upon every gentleman to understand. This I am sure of, that there is nothing more common, both for fools and men of sense, than, when their toast is demanded, to give a fashionable beauty whom they never saw. As to the Ladies, tho' none of them can be supposed much smitten with Miss Thingum, yet they are all unanimous in allowing her to be handsome, and this from a very obvious motive. They all know that any hesitation from them would be ascribed to envy, which, as it would both lessen themselves

selves, and add to the triumph of their rival, they are at a great deal of pains to hide; and all the while that they look upon her sway as usurpation, they for their own sakes assert her divine right. Mankind upon many such occasions become their own dupes, and fall prostrate before the idols which themselves have set up; but history, Lady Harriot, and the investigation of facts will always enable us to set the true stamp upon such sublime pretensions. Whatever is natural is of divine origin, and the first source of it will be for ever hid from our vain curiosity; but all sham claims to divinity are easily exposed, whenever the proper means are employed. Would you, for instance, be certified whether any particular race of Kings are by divine appointment, you need only trace their steps, and it is ten to one but you find the first of them at the head of a gang of rebels, murderers, and banditti. The same method of enquiry will set us right, as to the unbounded empire which town-toasts pretend to exercise over our hearts. A very little tracing will convince us, that altho' they are women by the external appointment of the Almighty, they owe their being, as universal beauties, to a very few men, and those perhaps neither the wisest nor the soberest of their species. At least we may in this manner account for the apparent universality of sentiment concerning them, to a degree that will render it

it too doubtfull for any conclusion to be drawn from it.

*Lord Modish.*

My dear Colonel, your history of miss Thingum, as you call her, is very plausible; but you have not given us the proof of any of those facts by which you pretend to trace the progress of her glory. You seem here, I think, to give more indulgence to your own guesses than you are commonly willing to allow to those of other people.

*Col. Freeman.*

Your objection, my Lord, is very just; and as I knew not how to strip those general facts of the appearance of guesses, I was not very positive in my inferences from them. My notion, however, of that matter is formed from real observations, strong enough from their number to convince myself; tho' singly too inconsiderable, to be of weight in a question of so general a nature, or to be urged as proof to your Lordship: unless your experience happen to coincide with mine; which I am apt to believe is in some measure the case, by your allowing my account to be plausible. But I have an argument much more clearly founded against the agreement of mankind, with regard to the beauty of any particular female; which is, that such an universality of sentiments would stand in contradiction to all the

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hitherto

hitherto known principles of nature: for it would have been given in vain, if not for very destructive purposes. For what could be supposed more ridiculous, and even fatal, than for all the inhabitants of London and Westminster to be real instead of pretended admirers of one woman? Happily for the world, their practice, which is much more to be depended on than their words, shews us that this is far from being the case; and that each of them has his fair, for whom he sighs in private, and whose name he thinks too sacred to be mingled with the ribaldry and midnight debauch of a tavern.

*Lady Harriot.*

That may be very true, Colonel; but may not a man think a woman beautifull without being in love with her? and on the contrary, may he not be in love with one whom he does not think beautifull? There is a thing they call the agreeable, which has often more powerfull effects than mere beauty.

*Lord Modish.*

Harriot is certainly in the right there, George; I believe there is no body but has, some time or other, felt that distinction.

*Col. Freeman.*

My Lord, I have often heard the distinction; but I am apt to suspect that it consists  
only

only in the opposition of real sentiment to mistaken knowledge; or rather, of a word with a meaning to one that has little or none.

*Lord Modish.*

I should be glad to have that explained.

*Col. Freeman.*

Indeed, my Lord, the distinction betwixt beautiful and agreeable, when applied to faces, is barely verbal, and will vanish, together with all the difficulties attending this subject, immediately upon a precise definition of those words. We have only to ask ourselves, what is beauty? The philosophical answer, is that form which pleases. Let us next ask, what is meant by an agreeable form, the answer is certainly, that which pleases. So that to determine which of the two, the beautiful or the agreeable woman, when put in opposition, is the genuine beauty, we need only examine the actual effects of both; and if it appears that love and desire are attendant upon agreeable women no less than upon beauties, as both your Lordship and Lady Harriot seem to allow, it will follow that the agreeable woman is really beautiful in the eyes of that man to whom she is agreeable, any reasoning or fashion to the contrary notwithstanding.

*B 2* *Lord*

*Lord Modish.*

Supposing your notion of the agreeable to be just, I should be glad to know what is then meant by beauty in opposition to what pleases only. You know it is a word in every body's mouth, and you cannot imagine they mean nothing at all by it. If I were inclined to doubt them, my own sentiments would convince me of their sincerity. Is there no such thing as regular features, which may satisfy the judgment, without touching the heart?

*Col. Freeman.*

I have many reasons, my Lord, to believe there is not; but without having recourse to any, the discourse of those who value themselves the most upon their connoisseurship in beauty, is sufficient to convince us that they talk with as little reflection as feeling upon the subject. Ask one of them what he means by regular features; he will first be surprised at your ignorance; and if you persist in your enquiry, will tell you, *features that are in due proportion*; ask what he means by due proportion, and he will perhaps tell you, after much stammering, *that Lady somebody's features are in due proportion*; ask why he thinks her features in due proportion, he will tell you, *because they are regular*; and if you carry on your questions to all eternity, the answers will still trot in the same

same circle they set out in; and tho' very far from making us more knowing than we were, are perhaps the best answers that the subject affords. The folly lies in answering at all to such questions——You seem in deep contemplation, my Lord.

*Lord Modish.*

Faith, George, I was first rummaging my brain to see whether I could not find there some rule by which features might be adjusted; but to no purpose. From that I have gone upon a more humble search, to try if I could discover what it was that had all along induced me to speak of such things. For I assure you I meant something; tho', to deal sincerely, I am not able, at this time, to tell what. Are you conjuror enough to guess what I meant?

*Col. Freeman.*

If my knowledge and penetration were equal to your Lordship's candor I should not despair, however difficult the task, of giving you complete satisfaction. But as it is only a guess you demand, you shall have it, hit or miss; and the readier that this is not the first time I have endeavoured to account to myself, for so whimsical a phenomenon in human nature. A very little sedate reflection must convince a man of sense that there is no standard of female beauty, to which all the various degrees of it may be referred; and yet it is no less plain that those

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who

who every day so earnestly dispute about those various degrees, must have something which they persuade themselves is a standard. The question is only, how they came by such a persuasion? My conjecture is, that it is acquired by early education, and so early, that no man is able to remember its first establishment in his mind. I suppose a child of two years old is told that miss what do you call it, whom he leads perhaps every day, is vastly handsome. This being the first time of his learning the word handsome or beautifull, and connecting an idea to it, he will never after be able to separate the word from its original impressions; but will, from that accidental conjunction, form to himself a general system of beauty, and will keep it up, by a traditional application of it to other women, many years after she who gave birth to his system is forgotten. And thus by a perverse adherence to theory, in a matter entirely practical, he will persist to his dying day, in extolling a certain sort of faces for which he has not the least desire or affection. In this manner five hundred men may have five hundred standards of beauty; which tho' all taken from women without any deformity or just exception, may be all exceedingly different from one another. What wonder is it then that one man's verdict upon a woman's beauty should be so little satisfactory to his companion, who measures her by another

ther scale. This cannot be called *disputing tastes*; because taste or sentiment is here entirely excluded; but it is equally useless and irrational.

Such however seem to be the grounds upon which the common run of mankind venture to give their judgement in those matters. With regard to the more instructed and polite there is another circumstance, which, having more the appearance of a common standard, has abundantly assisted in running them into disputes concerning beauty; and that is the agreement of painters and sculptors upon that head; which they suppose could not happen, if every artist was left to his own particular feeling of beauty, without any principles to guide him. But it is very easy to account for this agreement, without finding ourselves much nearer an universal standard than we were at first. No sooner were the arts of painting and sculpture brought to some degree of excellence, but the artists, in representing a Venus, an Helen, or any other personage, from whom beauty was expected, must have found all their endeavours to please rendered ineffectual by the variety of sentiments which different men by the various structure of their nerves and organs have of beauty: so that the painter's mistress however beautifull she might appear to him, and however justly he might portray her, would have little chance of charming the spectators,

who would each think his own *Dulcinea* infinitely superior to the *Venus*. Neither would he mend the matter by substituting a beauty of his judgment, according to the method just described, whilst every man had a standard of his own, equally partial, by which he condemned it. Here necessity, the mother of invention, would come to their assistance, and set him upon a method that, altho' it might charm few, would disgust no body; that is, to form a face that should affect a medium in all its features and proportions, carefully avoiding every thing extraordinary, however himself might be struck with it. He must have found that the one man, either by a peculiarity of real taste or of acquired prepossession, was fond of a high nose; and that another thought it detestable, whose heart was not to be won by any nose that look'd not like a saddle. That to one a fat cheek was charming, to another a lean, and that each despised the other's choice as deformed and ridiculous. The painters business was therefore to steer as clear as possible of these opposite rocks, and to give his goddess neither a high nor a low, but a straight nose, with cheeks that were neither fat nor lean, preserving the same mediocrity in all the proportions of her face. Upon such a principle as this we may suppose it was that Polycletus formed his *Venus*, which Pliny says was called the canon or standard; and that he actually did

did so still farther appears by all the antique statues now remaining; which by their great similarity plainly appear to be all copies, more or less exact, of one original, framed upon this cautious principle. But it is one thing not to be deformed, and another to be beautiful; one thing to avoid censure and another thing to please. Neither have I met with ought in the opinions of the eminent painters and sculptors, with whom I am used to converse, that any way inclines me to alter mine with regard to this matter. Those of them who have spent some of their best years in the study of the antique statues, and the modern imitations of them all over Italy, have told me that upon their first acquaintance they were not so much struck with the beauty of their faces; but that the more they saw them, the more their admiration of them encreased. But this after-admiration is far from being a proof of their having any thing remarkably beautiful in themselves; and is nothing more than the common effect of habit, which shews itself not only in things of an indifferent nature, such as cookery, dress, and furniture, but often also in things that are at first extremely nauseous and disagreeable, such as tobacco, coffee, and other drugs, which by use become so bewitching, that their votaries rather chuse to part with their health than resign them. Here then, in the antique, we find a sort of common measure,  
but

but which falls mightily in its value when we consider that it is only of a negative kind, from which no excellence, no striking grace can be expected; and likewise that imperfect as it is, it is known only to a few; perhaps not one in a hundred of those who talk about regular features; and of those few there is still a much smaller number, chiefly painters and sculptors, on whom the habit of looking at those antiques has been so constant as to make any real impression. In such it may be called their taste; but, as I hinted some time ago, we must be careful not to say that such people have a good or a bad taste, since whatever is truly taste, whether it belonged originally to the nerves, or was produced in them by habit, admits of no comparison. All we can say with propriety is, that such a man has the tobacco taste, or the sugar-candie taste, or the antique taste; that is, he likes tobacco, sugar-candie, or the antique. This has in it nothing comparative, and is only an assertion concerning a matter of fact of the simplest kind.

But, my Lord, I find my eagerness in endeavouring to satisfy your Lordship's demand, has led me into a Professorial kind of discourse, that will be little agreeable, I am afraid, to the Ladies. It is the common effect of such subjects; so let us call a new cause. Pray, Lady Modish, has your Ladyship seen the two new dancers that Rich has brought over?

*Lady*

*Lady Modish.*

Whether I have, or have not, I sha'n't tell you. And truly, Colonel, you ought to make us some apology for breaking off a serious conversation upon our account; as if we were incapable of being entertained by any thing but trifles. It is true we are seldom tried with any thing else, but that is not so much our fault as that of you men; who think, no doubt, to preserve your authority the better by keeping us in ignorance.

*Lady Harriot.*

Indeed, Colonel, the conclusion of your speech does not deserve, either from my sister or me, any acknowledgements that are favourable; and yet, such is my goodness, I cannot help owning that I have been much better entertained with your explanation of taste, than ever I was with any of those disputes which it daily occasions. Most men, indeed, who enter upon nice subjects before Ladies, seem rather, by their latin and cramp words, to aim at astonishing, than either entertaining or instructing us. But I must do you the justice to say that this is never your practice; for you always express yourself in so plain a way that I fancy I comprehend your whole meaning, tho' it is probable I am mistaken.

*Col.*

*Col. Freeman.*

I acknowledge, Ladies, both the justice and gentleness of your rebuke, and am perfectly sensible that, if I am not understood in a subject like this, which is not peculiar to any art or profession, the defect is in me, and not in either of your Ladyships. And as for the cramp words your Ladyship mentions, they are seldom any thing but skreens which vanity has hitherto employed in order to hide ignorance. Of late philosophy has put on a more familiar air, and is not ashamed to have it known that she is nothing but common sense and experience methodised; and that the truly learned language is that which is best understood.

*Lord Modish.*

I must own, Colonel, that the notion of an universal standard for the beauty of natural objects, would be very contradictory to that almost self-evident truth, that *whatever is is right*; since in the great variety of forms which God has contrived, the benign end of pleasing would have been frustrated, if he had not ordained a like variety to exist in the apprehensions and feelings of different men and different animals concerning those things.

*Col. Freeman.*

It is most certainly so, my Lord; and it is surprizing that so many ingenious men should  
have

have lost their time in a search, the vanity of which is so obvious. Hogarth owns that his line of beauty and grace is not to be seen in a toad; which if true, ought to have convinced him, either that there was no such line, or universal receipt for beauty; or else that he had not yet hit upon it: since it hardly admits of a doubt, that a blooming she toad is the most beautiful sight in the creation, to all the crawling young gentlemen of her acquaintance; and that her crawl, or as they may possibly call it, her *pas grave*, is far before the minuet step, with all its wavings. An analysis or dissection can never be begun of any subject till the subject itself is ascertained, and consequently no analysis can be made of abstract beauty, nor of any abstraction whatsoever. Till a real something is discovered, which we are sure by experience is universally the source of pleasure, any attempt to discover the universal principle of pleasure by analysis must be fruitless; and the philosopher who engages in such a business, after finding that he has been gravely measuring a dream with a pair of compasses, will probably return at last to the *je ne scay quoy*, upon which he had at first disdainfully turned his back. Does your Lordship know Sir Roger North?

*Lord Modish.*

Yes, a little, he seems to be a comical hearty old fellow.

*Col.*

Col. Freeman.

He is so, my Lord; but he is something more; for he is a man of a good deal of learning and reflection; tho', by a strange turn of temper, he seems to be at pains to conceal it, and when his good sense makes its appearance it is commonly under the disguise of wagery. I happened to be walking in the Mall with Sir Harry Beaumont, about a week after Crito was published, when Sir Roger came up to us, and, after congratulating his brother Baronet upon the success of his performance, and the figure it was like to give him in the eyes of the Misses, as an arbiter of beauty, Sir Harry, says he, I observe that in your distribution of grace you give twenty degrees to Mrs. A—, and thirty to Mrs. B—. Now I do not find fault with your tables, but I should be glad to know by what scale, weight, or measure you compute their several shares with so much precision. You certainly, answered Sir Harry, did not read my paper with much attention, or else you would have seen that *I did not pretend to have made my calculations exactly; but rather to point out what might be done by more exact judges of beauty.* Ay, but, Sir Harry, says the old Knight, let who will calculate those tables of beauty, it will have but a very unscholarlike appearance, if, when the exactness of their calculations happens to be called in question, they should have nothing

nothing better to appeal to, than the infallibility of their own judgements. I am afraid that method would hardly pass muster at the Royal Society. Now you must know, when I was a boy I was a great dab at figures, and tho' I seldom foul my fingers with pen and ink, as my steward knows, not to his cost, I have not yet forgot the rules, and have been thinking that the rule of three or rule of proportion, might be applied so as to become a golden rule in comparing beauties as much as any thing else. It is performed, you know, by multiplying the first by the second, and dividing by the third; and being curious this morning to know with exactness how much Mrs. D—— excelled in beauty Mrs. C——, I thus stated the question, as a cat is to a wheel-barrow so is Mrs. C—— to Mrs. D——; but tho' I try'd till my brain was ready to crack, I never could contrive how to multiply a cat by a wheel-barrow; so I could go no farther in my calculations. Now if you or any other virtuoso could fall upon the method of multiplying and dividing such matters; I am persuaded you would find out a certain method of gauging every woman's beauty, and prevent it from being any longer left to the particular whim of ignorant people. Sir Harry was a little stunn'd with this whimsical attack, but he did not lose his good humour and only said; I see you are still the old man, Sir Roger; what should be grave you constantly turn to  
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farce, and then left us to run after Miss Hoyden, who was crossing towards the palace. When he was gone, says Sir Roger to me, our friend Sir Harry may despise the old proverb as much as he will, but such comparisons will always be odious, and it is no wonder, for they will always be absurd.

*Lord Modish.*

I believe, indeed, we must leave the beauties of nature, where every thing is perfect in itself, to every one's particular taste, without attempting to dispute or compare them. But if I give you up that, I hope you will allow us that there may be a good or a bad taste where the contrivance of man has had a part. What say you, for instance to a good taste in architecture?

*Col. Freeman.*

The same, my Lord, that I should say to a good taste in dress or cookery, that, abstracted from health and conveniency, the objects of reason, it is one of those tastes which custom, a second nature has bestowed upon us; and is so much mere taste that it can never with any propriety, become a matter of dispute or comparison. To insist upon one form of dress, or one form of building, being in itself more beautiful than another, must appear to a philosopher entering upon as senseless a controversy, as the pretending that one dish was in itself  
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more palatable than another, and that he who preferred the one had a better taste than he who preferred the other.

*Lord Modish.*

But sure, Colonel, there are rules for the beauties of architecture, and not the smallest ornament of a base or cornish without its settled proportion.

*Col. Freeman.*

Were that strictly the case, my Lord, we should call it knowledge or judgement in architecture, not taste; for, as far as these rules go, no taste is required, either good or bad. An Artist may, by a Palladian receipt alone, without any taste, form a very elegant Corinthian pillar; as a cook, without any palate, and by the help of the housewife's *vade mecum* only, makes an unexceptionable dish of *beef a la daube*. These rules are plainly no more than the analysis of certain things which custom has rendered agreeable; but do not point out to us any natural standard of beauty or flavour, by which such things, whether pillars or dishes, could have been originally contrived to answer the purpose of pleasing. I should be exceedingly glad to hear a reason why an Ionic capital clapt upon its shaft upside-down should not become by custom as pleasing a spectacle as in the manner it commonly stands. I know this would be lookt upon as a sort of blasphemy by

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some of our delectanti ; but so is every opinion, however reasonable, which opposes what is by custom established in any country. Perhaps there are countries in the world where my capital is so much in taste, that their virtuosi would be surprized to hear that there was any nation so absurd as to put the volutes uppermost. At least there is no imagination of that sort so odd that some similar experience is not sufficient to justify and render probable.

*Lord Modish.*

How then came the present fashion (since you will have it to be no better) of architecture to be so universally embraced ?

*Col. Freeman.*

It's universality, my Lord, does not extend beyond Christendom ; and, if it should become the taste of the whole universe, the same means, which have procured it a reception among us, will account for its further progress, without our giving ourselves the trouble of searching for any standard in nature for its recommendation. It is the nature of all fashions (I except only those of a religious kind) to take their rise from the sovereign will and pleasure of the rich and powerful. Men in such circumstances are known from thence to acquire a presumption, which naturally induces them to take the lead in every thing ; while those very circumstances which engage them to indulge

dulge their caprices, enables them at the same time to render those caprices respectable. As for instance, let a man of ordinary rank or figure appear in publick in a coat whose cuffs are triangular, when the mode is square; and there is no doubt he will meet with many to despise, but none to imitate him. Let the same be tried by a man blest with title, riches, youth, and all the trappings of prosperity; let the sleeve be of velvet curiously embroidered, and part of a suit of cloaths in all other respects fashionable and rich, the triangle will then be found to meet with a quite different reception, and tho' feeble in itself, will be so powerfully seconded by, being incorporated with, the title, the embroidery, the coach, and the footmen, as to become part of the august idea of his grace; and so far from being able to render him ridiculous, will receive a share of respect by being part of him; and from being tolerable, will soon become an object of imitation, especially to the persons who are the most intimate with him and his cloaths. The more those imitations encrease, the more the sensation of their beauty is confirmed; till in a short time all other cuffs but the triangular are detestable. City taylor's bribe his Lordship's valet de chambre to let them take it's shape and proportions; and here is, at last, a precise rule established.

*Lord Modish.*

My dear George, this is a lamentable sinking from architecture to cuffs.

*Col. Freeman.*

I do that, my Lord, in imitation of some great men of our acquaintance, who let themselves down very low in order to rise with the more security. The progress of fashion in dress, and the feelings which are the consequence of that progress, being the most familiar and having at the same time the quickest revolutions, are of all others the fittest to explain the nature of fashion in general. The fashions in building, tho' more durable than those in dress, are not for that the less fashions, and are equally subject to change. But as stones and bricks are more lasting than silk and velvet, and as people do not make up churches and palaces so often as they do coats and capuchines, we must have recourse to history for the knowledge of those changes, which we can learn but very imperfectly from our own proper experience. In history we shall find that every nation received it's mode of architecture from that nation which, in all other respects, was the highest in credit, riches, and general estimation. The admiration that attends whatever is great in its dimensions, costly in its materials, and precise in its execution, is, as far as our experience goes, universal; and naturally inclines the mind in favour of any form which accident has combined

bined with those admirable qualities. The Egyptians were the first people we know of who were so rich, and at their ease, as to build with grandeur, cost, and neatness; and from thence inspired the Greeks with a love for those ornaments which their caprice had added to the usefull part of architecture. The Greeks, in their turn, becoming for many ages a free, a rich, and a happy people, had an opportunity of practising those arts in many sumptuous buildings; where, besides the invention of arches, and other solid improvements in the art of building, they made many changes, as their fancy led them, upon the Egyptian ornaments. In this state was architecture when it was transplanted to Rome, by a people who by perpetual wars had in a short time arrived, from the meanest origin, to the greatest height of power. Destitute of money, and profoundly ignorant of all the arts of peace, they had never raised any buildings of which they could boast; and no sooner had they an opportunity of considering the Grecian temples and other public works, great in themselves, and set off with all that costly materials and the genius of their excellent painters and sculptors could add to the skill of the mason, but struck with the complex object, they decreed the Greeks to be the only architects in the world, and submitted willingly to receive laws in the arts from those whom their arms had subdued. Perhaps the philosophy, poetry, and musick of Greece, for which

they began at the same time to take a relish, served not a little to raise the reputation of the Greeks, and might strengthen their authority in architecture; though not necessarily connected with it. An admiration, to a degree of bigotry seized the Roman artists and connoisseurs, and put an effectual stop to any farther change or improvement in architecture. Their sole study was to imitate the Grecian buildings, and the being like or unlike to them became soon the measure of right and wrong. Rules so compiled were committed to writing, and continue to this day, together with some of the ancient buildings upon which they were formed, to be the standard of taste all over christendom. Time may possibly produce on it insensible changes, but there is almost nothing which can be imagined to give it a total overthrow, unless Europe should become a conquest of the Chinese.

*Lord Modish.*

If the five orders of architecture with all their paraphernalia are to reign in splendor, till we are conquered by the Chinese, they need be under little apprehension. But, my dear Colonel, allowing this chimerical conquest of yours to take place, why must our architecture be destroyed along with our freedom? Why may we not as well suppose that our conquerors should receive the fashion in

in those matters from us, as you say the conquering Romans did from the Greeks?

*Col. Freeman.*

Because, my Lord, the circumstances of the conquerors and the conquered would be very different. In China the arts of peace have been long cultivated, and they have been long charmed with buildings, which, though of a taste very bad, according to our notions, are yet more extensive and more sumptuously adorned than ours. It would be no wonder, then, if they refused to change that form of building which long usage had rendered graceful, for one which had all the awkwardness of novelty, without any other advantage to dazzle and prepossess them in its favour. To them the simplicity of the antique would appear mean and rustic, and Covent-Garden church, the pride of English architecture, would be judged fitter for a barn than a temple. Neither do I mention this to your Lordship upon bare conjecture, but from the similar experience of what formerly happened in Europe when it was overrun by the Goths. I see you smile at the mention of my friends the Goths; but allow me to tell your Lordship the Goths were not so Gothic as they are generally imagined. The arts, indeed, of poetry and painting seem to have been unknown or neglected among them; but in that they could be little worse than the people they overcame, and

in some other respects they were much their superiors. Civil discord, and all the evils that attend anarchy when joined to a most contemptible superstition, had produced in the Roman empire a poverty of every kind, and an almost total obliteration of those arts and sciences for which the same nations had been, but a few centuries before, so justly celebrated. Amongst the Gothic nations the art of war was well understood, as appears by their constant superiority, whenever they appeared in the field; and all the states of Europe, who at this day enjoy any of the blessings of good government, are ready to own that from this Gothic source those blessings were derived. But they were not like the Romans, a gang of meer plunderers, sprung from those who had been, but a little while before their conquest of Greece, naked thieves and runaway slaves; but a colony from an empire, no less than that of the Parthians, which had long subsisted in splendor and magnificence, and which, in establishing itself upon the ruins of the empire of Persia, had succeeded to the greatest part of its riches, luxury, and elegance. It is in Parthia or Persia that we must look for the origin of those shoals of warlike men, and for the origin of that taste of architecture of which the stately examples still remain, like so many trophies to mark the progress of their victories. And if we turn our eyes to the seats of the present Sophi of Persia, we shall there see

see the pointed arch, and all the other parts of what we call Gothic architecture, still in high fashion, and studded over, as Milton says, *with barbaric pearl and gold.*

*Lord Modish.*

I do remember, now you put me in mind of it, to have seen at Sir John Locke's, a collection of drawings representing bridges, palaces, and mosques, done, as he told me, from the buildings themselves, while he was resident at Ispahan; and which very well correspond with what you say concerning the likeness between the Persian and Gothic taste of architecture. But I should not think that likeness, however strong, a sufficient proof, that those, who have been always called Northern nations, were really the sons of the East.

*Col. Freeman.*

There are, my Lord, a great many other proofs of the Parthic or Persian extraction of the Goths to be gathered from the similitude of language and manners, and even from the history of their migration. Some of these proofs, as they accidentally occurred to me in my reading, I have been at the pains to commit to paper, and shall communicate them to your Lordship upon your return to London, if your curiosity leads you to the enquiry. But whether they came from Persia or Peru, it is plain from the sight of the first public buildings erected by them, upon their entrance into the

the Roman provinces, that they came from some great and established empire, where the art of building with grandeur and magnificence had been, by the practice of many ages, brought to an uncommon degree of perfection. Structures such as Westminster Abbey, with which Germany, France and Spain abound, so extensive, yet so neat, so strong, and yet so richly, nay sometimes finically ornamented, can never be supposed the contrivance of hungry soldiers, during their march through the enemy's country; nor of obscure savages, just escaped from under the snows of Sweden and Norway. Such arts are not so suddenly brought to perfection as to be the offspring of one man's brain; and, if they were, yet the concurrence of all the different branches of those invaders, whether Vandals, Huns, Saxons, Normans, or Franks, in the same forms and decorations plainly shew that there were certain ancient and established rules for those things, which they all equally knew and respected. To men, thus prepossessed with ideas both grand and precise, the buildings they met with in the Roman provinces must have appeared mean and flat; and if they destroyed any of them without hesitation, whenever they stood in their way, it must not be attributed to their barbarous insensibility of what was elegant; but to their overweening fondness for their own taste, and unreasonable desire of imposing it upon others: a malady, which the most polished people, when

when unrestrained by reasoning and reflection, are equally subject to, with the most savage.

*Lord Modish.*

That the Goths did make their taste of architecture the reigning taste over Europe for several ages, I very well know. But, my dear George, your reason for its taking place of the Grecian, is not at all satisfactory; for if it bore it down at first by its loftiness and richness, it might, with much more ease, have maintained its superiority, after being familiarised by time to the conquered as well as their invaders. I should conclude, therefore, from the restoration of the Greek architecture, that it had something in its forms peculiarly adapted to please the sight, which made it at length surmount all the obstacles which force and custom had thrown in its way.

*Col. Freeman.*

Your doubts, my Lord, are exceedingly just, and I do not believe that any degree of knowledge in lines or numbers would ever be able to solve them. But there are many seeming mysteries, and which continue such against all the powers of abstract reasoning, which history, by leading us step by step, renders plain and simple. Many ages had bishops and barons, monks and knights errants, who kept the people of Europe in slavery and dissention, sloth, ignorance and misery. All the arts which tended  
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to render life more humane and agreeable, were utterly discountenanced and forbid; and those alone kept up and practised, which were of use in supporting the pride and power of those tyrants. Canon law to defend the worldly pretensions of church-men, and metaphysics to promote and defend their spiritual absurdities, for the same gainful purpose, were what passed currently by the name of learning. When these failed, in determining the truth or falsehood of a proposition, recourse was had, legally and coolly, to single combat; a kind of logic, absurd enough in all conscience, and yet perhaps not the most absurd kind then in use. Painting and sculpture were not yet found necessary to be called in aid of these holy cheats; so no man, as may well be supposed, presumed to carve or draw the resemblance of any thing upon earth. Military architecture shewed itself only in the castles of private gentlemen, with moats and draw-bridges; and the civil was only to be lookt for in cathedrals and cloisters. The rest were all hovels and beggary. At last, about the fourteenth century, the cloud of ignorance began to disperse. The arrogance and avarice of the church of Rome had stretched the cord till it cracked, and brought on, in several parts of Europe, an enquiry into the spiritual rights of mankind, which that corporation had so grossly invaded; and these having been so interwoven with their temporal rights, the enquiry always became the more exten-

extensive, the more it proceeded ; so that books, reading, and all kinds of knowledge, became every day more and more in request. About this time the Greeks, flying from the Turks, after the taking of Constantinople, brought over their books and language into Italy: which, partly by the countenance and patronage of the family of Medicis, in a little time became a fashionable part of learning, till then utterly unknown in the West. A like unfortunate cause with that which brought over the learned Grecians, had before that time transported to Florence some Greek painters, bad indeed, but sufficiently skilful to sow those seeds of the art, which, by proper encouragement, first at Florence, and afterwards at Rome, Venice, and Bologna, arrived at so admirable a degree of perfection. The polite arts, and all the several branches of true learning, have so immediate a connection that they always march together ; and it is impossible to find any one of them in a tolerable degree, without finding along with it some portion of each of the rest. Thus, at the same time that the Greek and Roman classics were diligently sought after, amidst the dust and scholastic nonsense of the libraries and convents ; the pick-ax was every where employed among the ruins, in search of statues and bas-reliefs, which the ignorance and misery of the times had suffered to lie for ages under ground. At the court of Rome, for the support of whose power  
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some measure of true learning was at last become necessary, these enquiries after the learning and elegance of their heathen ancestors, were carried on with the greatest eagerness; and the rising love of painting, sculpture, and music, was not a little promoted by the use they perceived those arts might be of, in supporting a gainful superstition just ready to fall into contempt. Then it was that the Romans first began to cast an eye of admiration upon the noble remains of heathen architecture, with which their city is, to this day, so richly stored. In that imperial city, the Gothic people, tho' they had, oftener than once, committed horrible devastations, had never made any settlement, nor ever raised any fabric. The buildings there had ever been according to the Grecian taste; but that being kept up only by tradition, without any precise rules, it had changed extremely from its original. To effect a total alteration in the fashions of any country, is an exceeding difficult undertaking; but here was only required a reformation, and a reformation that had antiquity and primitive purity for its principles. No sooner, then, was the love of heathen antiquity afloat, but the Bramantes and Michelangelos set themselves with great diligence to measure all the parts of all the ancient buildings of Rome, and soon, by the help of Vitruvius, composed a system of architecture, which, as far as it pretended to go, brought back the Augustan age to the masons and carpenters. Florence, and the

the rest of the cities of Italy, that were, with respect to architecture, in almost the same state with Rome, entered readily into this scheme of reformation, which, crossing the Alps, with the joint cry of all Italy, at that time the school of learning and politeness, carried every thing before it. And those Gothic structures, which had so long lorded it over all other works of stone and mortar, were now decry'd as gigantic and barbarous. Increase of trade and riches, all over Europe, particularly from the new discovered Indies, produced a great number of sumptuous buildings in the new fashion; so that the fondness for it, which was probably, at first, no more than an affectation of Italian elegance, grew, in a little time, to be a real taste or sentiment.

*Lord Modish.*

Of buildings did he speak, like Solomon, from the Pyramids of Egypt, even to the Banqueting house at Whitehall. As I hope to be saved, George, you would make an excellent grand master of the free and accepted Masons, and would prelect upon the wonders of the letter G, to the astonishment of the whole lodge. But, seriously, we are all vastly obliged to you for this short history of a long transaction, many particulars of which I knew before, but never before heard them connected in so regular a chain. What you have said to prove that the beauties of architecture have no deeper foun-

foundation than fashion, that is habit form'd upon caprice, carries with it great appearance of truth. But you philosophy men, when you take up any principle, are very apt to carry it farther than it will go, and to a single cause often ascribe an effect which perhaps proceeds from half a dozen. In many cases I will allow you that habit has a share in forming our sentiments; but is there not likewise an inseparable connection betwixt beauty and propriety? And will not that which is fit and suitable in itself, be always more or less pleasing to the beholder?—I am afraid I don't express my meaning in the proper terms.

*Col. Freeman.*

Exactly, my Lord, like one of the trade. Such are the very expressions used by the followers of Hutchison, Shaftsbury, and Plato; who drew, moreover, this very obvious conclusion from them, that by our different feelings or sensations of pleasure and dislike, we may safely pronounce the objects, from whence those sensations arise, to be right or wrong in themselves, without any farther examination or reflection. Happy sense for those who are endowed with it, and for which one would willingly renounce all human understanding, which is liable to many errors. What pity it is that so pleasing an opinion, so elegant a system should have no foundation in fact! Hold up, for a moment, the mirror of  
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experience to this metaphysical phantom, and it shrinks into the nothing from whence it sprung. The approbation of reason, and the approbation of taste, which those gentlemen have been at so much pains to unite and confound, will be found in their nature distinct and separate, and to be allotted for visibly different purposes by the author of our nature. That they often coincide is likewise true; but it is owing to other causes than their natural and inseparable connection, as will be perceived in examining the cases where this coincidence does, and where it does not appear. To begin with the most simple: The apothecary's prentice brings a dose of the bark to a man sick of the ague: The reason and experience of the physician, perhaps the patient's own experience, assure him, that swallowing this drug will restore him to his health. What says taste? That it is the devil of a dose; that it ought to be put off till to morrow, and in the mean time calls for t'other bottle of Champaign. Taste then has no skill in physick. Let us see next whether taste, in its more remote and figurative applications, is more closely allied to fitness and utility. Amongst the objects of sight, there are none with which we are so familiar as those which dress exhibits, nor, as I before observed. to your Lordship, so proper to produce examples for

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this subject. And there it will be ever found that our feelings of pleasure and dislike are conducted entirely by custom, not only in matters indifferent, but often in opposition to what is usefull and proper. Pray, Lady Modish, what would your Ladyship think of our fine gentlemen, if they were to dress with their arms naked to the elbows ?

*Lady Modish.*

I should certainly think them very shocking creatures ; at least if I may guess by the disgusting appearance which butchers and hatters make, in the like equipage.

*Col. Freeman.*

Your Ladyship, I am persuaded, speaks not only your own sentiments, but likewise the sentiments of all the ladies in England, upon the occasion. All would agree unanimously, at first, in its being an ugly sight ; and yet it is impossible to find out, in the naked arm of a well-proportioned man, any natural impropriety whence this sentiment of deformity arises ; nor any that is not equally, at least, attached to the naked arm of a well-proportioned woman, an object which is allowed to raise in every one a sentiment very opposite. Custom alone can account for this whimsical taste, which breaks thro'

thro' all rules of reason and propriety ; for a disengagement from sleeves is without doubt most befitting the sex which is the most active, and destined for robust exercise and labour ; and a close covering, especially in a cold climate, the most proper for that sex which suffers most from its inclemency. I have lived long enough in the world, Ladies, to see a great many changes in it, particularly with regard to the buckles, which have been now large, now small, now round, now square, and all, in their turns, fraught with beauty and deformity. These changes are productive of much good to many industrious tradesmen and their families, and, generally speaking, very indifferent to the wearers. But I remember, about seven or eight years ago, the buckles, from the toes, where they had reigned in splendor some years before, had insensibly crept up to the leg ; and so great was the desire, in our smarts, of creating pleasing feelings in the beholders by an amazing length of foot, that I have seen many of them limping about Ranelagh with their buckles above the joint. Instances of this kind in architecture are not so easily found. Building is, by its nature, a more serious and more deliberate affair than dress, and less subject, one would think, to the influence of whim ; yet it is not altogether destitute of examples, where the eye is

pleased with what is the reverse of convenience. For some of these a general cause, or rather origin, may be assigned. The present taste of architecture was formed, not upon the palaces and dwelling-houses of the ancient Greeks and Romans, of which there were no vestiges at the revival of the arts, but upon their temples and other publick buildings, from which the ornamental part has been borrowed and applied to domestic use, in a manner abundantly absurd for the most part, and which, nevertheless, custom has rendered agreeable to the sight. I could name to your Lordship several houses, besides my Lord Mayor's, where the desire of charming the passengers, has induced the architect to darken the principal apartments, by clapping before the windows stately pillars which support nothing, or, which is much the same, nothing of any use. Whatever pains those gentlemen may take to dignify the ornamental part of their art by scientific reasonings about propriety and fitness, it will be found at last to owe all its power of pleasing to custom only. Ask one of them by what means it is, that a window pleases by being longer than it is broad, and a chimney by being broader than it is long; he will tell you, that it is from their natural fitness for their several purposes, such and such being the nature of light, and such and such being the

the nature of smock. But let him be ever so learned in light and smock, this is but a shallow solution of the difficulty. The plain truth is, that on account of their fitness for their several purposes they have been from time immemorial so form'd; but it is the habit of seeing them constantly so form'd, and not their fitness, which produces in us that sense of their beauty. This process will account for all the conjunctions of beauty and propriety which to most people pass for necessary connections. What is the reason that any heavy body, supported by few and weak pillars, gives us an unpleasing feeling? Because the danger and inconveniency of such a disposition has been long known, and with care avoided; so that the least infringement of the established practice will shock us immediately by its unusualness, without allowing our reason to interfere by a slow discussion of its impropriety. In like manner may we account for all that concerns moral taste and sentiments; which will appear, upon the slightest comparison of the feelings of different nations with regard to behaviour, to be immediately and necessarily dependant upon custom, and but remotely and accidentally connected with right and wrong, or the invariable fitness of things.

*Lord Modish.*

I begin to be afraid that taste, at last, must content himself with ruling over the finer arts. There I think you will hardly try to pull him from his throne.

*Col. Freeman.*

What arts does your Lordship comprehend under that title?

*Lord Modish.*

Musick, poetry, and painting; or, as they call them, the sister arts,

*Col. Freeman.*

I know they are often so called; and indeed there is so great a likeness betwixt two of them, poetry and painting, that their sisterhood will be readily allowed: but betwixt musick and painting there is no likeness at all; and I am apt to suspect that musick passes for the sister of poetry, rather from their being often seen in company, than from any resemblance they bear to each other. For this reason, when I examine how far taste is concerned in these arts, I shall consider musick by itself. But either the distinction betwixt taste and judgment, which I gave your Lordship some time ago,  
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is false, or else taste is totally excluded from being a determiner in works of art, and must leave that task for judgment to perform. An art has been thus defined by one of the most sagacious of the ancients, *a system of rules acquired by study, and reduced to practice, for some usefull purpose.* Now wherever there is a rule or rules, by which any work is supposed to be conducted, that rule, being known, must serve equally for a standard to those who would determine with propriety concerning its merit or degree of excellence. An art, then, and whatever pretends to a standard, is an object of judgment and not of taste. As to musick, it is certainly an art, so far as geometry is concerned in it; but as the mathematical part of musick is totally unknown to 999 in a thousand of those who set up for connoisseurs in musick, including the performers, we may venture to say that it is, with regard to them, no art at all. These virtuosos, therefore, have nothing but their own taste, that is, their own private liking, to set up for a standard, or, what is little more mathematical, the liking which those of their club, city, or nation have acquired by habit, that is, by the daily repetition of a certain strain of musick. What disputes therefore happen upon that subject must be no less absurd, than when cookery is the subject of controversy. With

regard to the sister arts of painting and poetry, the case is very different: for in these arts there is not only a standard, but one so level to the common sense of mankind, that the most ignorant are acquainted with it; and, if it is unknown or mistaken by any, it is by the half-learned, who from their own conceit, or a respect for the authority of coxcombs, have tried to undervalue common sense, in order to substitute something which they thought better, in its stead.

*Lord Modish.*

There is no doubt, Colonel, that there are rules for poetry and painting, and that there have been many ingenious books written both in prose and verse concerning these rules. But I fancy they are not so universally known as you would have us believe.

*Col. Freeman.*

Pardon me, my Lord; I have reason to be convinced by a thousand experiments, that the leading principle of criticism in poetry and painting, and that of all the learned principles which is the most unexceptionably true, is known to the lowest and most illiterate of the people. Those experiments are easily made. Your Lordship has only to hide yourself behind the screen in your drawing-room,

room, and order Mrs. Hannah to bring in one of your tenant's daughters, and I will venture to lay a wager that she shall be struck with your picture by La Tour, and no less with the view of your seat by Lambert, and shall, fifty to one, express her approbation by saying, they are *vastly natural*. When she has said this, she has shewn that she knew the proper standard, by which her approbation was to be directed, as much, at least, as she would have done, if she had got Aristotle by heart and all his commentators. He has defined those arts, *arts of imitation*, and his definition, though often obscured and confounded by more modern connoisseurs, has never been contradicted by any. The same country girl, who applauds the exact representation of a man and a house which she has seen, will, for the same reason, be charmed with Hogarth's march to Finchly, as that is a representation, though not of persons, yet of general manners and characters, with which we may suppose her to be acquainted. And if she is less struck with the historical pictures of distant ages and countries, though equally well painted, it is not because her critical standard is not equally applicable to them, but because the subject and manners, there meant to be represented, are to her unknown, and must pass with as little observation and  
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remark as a good portrait of a person whom she had never seen. In all this I see no pretension taste has to be consulted. It requires first eyes to see, and then judgment to compare the exhibited image with that of the absent object, which is stored up in the remembrance, and is plainly a reflective and compound operation of the mind. It is indeed so quick and instantaneous, that it often passes for a simple feeling or sentiment; and is sometimes mentioned as such by critics of no mean reputation, for want of having considered the nature of the mental faculties with that accuracy which they deserve. The general standard of poetry is exactly the same, and equally obvious with that of painting, and any experiment you make in that art upon a farmer's daughter, will be found to have a like event. It is only middling poetry which the illiterate do not understand and admire; when it arrives at a supreme degree of excellence it is adapted to the lowest class; and though other poets might have their partisans amongst the critics, there is no question but Homer was the delight of every cook-maid in Greece.

*Lord Modish.*

What, and won't you allow good and bad in poetry to be distinguishable by taste upon any occasion?

*Col.*

*Col. Freeman.*

No, my Lord.

*Lord Modish.*

Then, my dear Colonel, your speculations and your common language are very little consistent: for you said, no longer ago than this morning, upon glancing over some madrigals which are published in Rowe's edition of Shakespear, that the people of that age had a wretched taste in poetry.

*Col. Freeman.*

It is true, my Lord; and I own myself to blame in using a word upon any occasion, which, as appears by the conversation we have had, is applied to so many different purposes, as to be unfit for any. We have seen that it sometimes signifies the faculty of distinguishing things simply and without comparison; sometimes that which pleases simply; sometimes that which pleases by particular habit, but most commonly, that which pleases by general habit, or what is properly expressed by the single word fashion. In this last sense it was, my Lord, that I understood the word taste, when I said the taste of poetry was very bad in England, about a century ago; although  
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it is certain no age ever more abounded with men of genius and study.

*Lord Modish.*

Darker and darker, by Pluto ! I fancied Colonel, about half an hour ago, that I had got a little light into your system, but now I don't see one glimpse. You told us then, that poetry was an art, and the object of judgment, and now you give us to understand, that neither imagination, reading, nor reflection, for that I suppose you mean by genius and study, are able to keep it in the right road.

*Col. Freeman.*

It is but too true, my Lord ; these things can avail but little in the conducting of poetry, if fashion, or, as they please to call it, taste, takes it into his head to mislead her. And when, by the neglect of just principles, any nation has habitually acquired a liking or taste to cookery that is unwholesome, to architecture that is inconvenient, or to poetry that, instead of instruction, conveys no ideas, or, what is worse, false ideas to the mind : we may say, with great propriety, that such a nation has a vitiated or a bad taste.

*Lord*

*Lord Modish.*

But how could habit, for I perceive now a little what you mean, so soon pervert our writers as to lead them all together into the same sort of error, even at the very first appearance of poetry in England?

*Col. Freeman.*

To come easily, my Lord, to the knowledge of this, it will be necessary, once more, to turn our eyes to what was doing in the ages which preceded this. In those days, when miraculous legends under the name of history, and the abdsurdest of metaphysics by way of philosophy, composed almost the whole of learning; poetry, which ever shares the fate of history and philosophy, was likewise at the lowest ebb. Instead of representations of truth and the real existence of things, it consisted only of relations in ryme of giants, winged horses, griffins, castles moated round with fire and brimstone, knights that killed ten or a dozen men by one blow, and hermits that raised as many from the dead by one prayer, with a thousand other lies; which, however monstrous and unentertaining they may appear to us, were to those people so correspondent to the ideas that had been early imposed by authority upon them, that they appeared

peared not only probable, but true : and although this correspondence of ideas could not be very striking, as it is impossible for the idle chimeras of a writer's brain to be exactly the same with those of his reader, yet they ceased not, along with persuasion, to give them some sort of amusement. This was the state of the epic; and low as it might be, was only to be found in the happier climates of Italy and the south of France. There likewise they pretended to a sort of lyric poetry, under the name of sonettes and madrigals, which, being founded upon the metaphysical quibbling then in vogue, instead of the truth of passion and sentiment, was wholly made up of juggling expressions, that, with much subtlety, kept up a seeming relation betwixt thoughts, in themselves, not at all a kin. A sort of writing, though called by some people to this day wit, much inferior to fair punning; as it equally trifles with the understanding, without the merit of shaking the sides. The arts, however, by the means I mentioned some time ago, began to revive; but they did not all keep an equal pace in their improvement. Though history was soon brought, in Italy, to a great degree of excellence, philosophy, still a stranger to experiment, continued to be only a less absurd sort of metaphysics; and by keeping trifling subtleties still in request,

likewise

likewise retarded the sympathetic improvement of poetry : while her sister painting, disdaining the slow, bungling, and deceitful medium of words, soon shone forth with all the lustre of nature and truth. All, however, were equally admired by the nations on this side of the Alps, who, having small pretensions of their own, and astonished with the transcendent glory of Italy, received indiscriminately every thing that came from thence as the model of perfection. In England, for causes that are easily assigned, the art of painting never took root; but, though none of our artists were inspired with the divine spirit of Raphael and Corregio, our poets were much the worse for having read Dante, Ariosto, and Petrarch; the imitation of whom they preferred to good sense and the imitation of nature. From this cause proceeded the tedious allegories, as they call them, of Spenser, and the jingling and strained conceits of Sir Philip Sidney. Happily for us there were no Italian models for tragedy; else Shakespear's Othello might have been as poor as his sonnets; and yet even in these his most unrivaled performances the mode is often seen to prevail over the genius and reflection of that great poet. Soon after this importation of Italian taste, the power and majesty of the commons of England began to shew itself; and as the  
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contests concerning the liberty and rights of Christians had introduced a spirit of enquiry into Europe, so that spirit was carried still farther in England, by a new contest concerning the peculiar rights of Englishmen. Along with liberty all manner of property was farther ascertained, and that exorbitant power restrained which had been exercised by kings and priests over the opinions and sentiments, as well as the goods, of the people. The pleasure that arises from the discovery of truth, and the just relation of things, is one of the greatest and most lasting which human nature is capable of; and so strong it is that to stifle and repress it requires no small degree of violence. But this being withdrawn, the natural desire again takes place, and always with success. So it happened in England, where learning went hand in hand with the constitution in all its changes. As liberty and order grew, learning and just sentiments flourished; as those degenerated into enthusiasm and anarchy, a like fever succeeded in the state of literature. It was madness, indeed, but it was of the vigorous sort, from whence much good was still to be expected. Accordingly, upon the return of a more settled government at the restoration, when liberty was tempered by a certain degree of fixt subordination, the sciences likewise took a more orderly

orderly and more polite turn, without giving up any of that freedom which they had assumed. Party controversies lost much of their acrimony, and men began to use the weapons and dexterity which they had acquired in these contests, to more peaceable and more valuable purposes. The royal society was founded, and those hints which Sir Francis Bacon had given with regard to experimental philosophy, were diligently prosecuted by the ingenious men of that age; so that authority began, by little and little, to give way to matter of fact, supposition to certainty, and words to things. But tho' in motion, still the progress of poetry was slow. It is not enough for poets to compose in times of good sense; it is necessary, in order to their writing well, that they should be born in such times. The ideas which fill the infant imagination will always, more or less, keep possession of it; and are not easily to be changed by later knowledge and reflection. Notwithstanding these new improvements in knowledge, the gentle Waller still deckt his Sacharissa, with such unscented gum-flowers as had adorned the Laura of Petrarch; and still Milton thought it proper to march his angels in a cubic phalanx of well-bodied air, to attack as formidable a body of devils, who received them with cannon in their hands and puns

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in their mouths. Intrepid devils that knowing themselves to be immortal dared to look death in the face, and to expose their unsubstantial forms to be pierced by the immaterial spears of their adversaries. What greater instance can be required of the detestable influence of romantic and scholastic jargon, than its producing such a hodge-podge in the brain of a man who has given such proofs, upon other occasions, of a truly natural and noble genius. At last the revolution, by establishing the rights of the several orders in the commonwealth upon a clear and solid basis, made way for an entire dissolution of that alliance, which had long been so stupidly and villainously cemented betwixt religion and politics. Metaphysics, now no longer necessary in support of opinions which were now no longer useful in the acquisition of power and riches, sunk by degrees into contempt, and nature having at last shewn her true and beautiful face, poetry from acting the part of a magic lanthorn teeming with monsters and chimeras; resumed her genuine province, like the camera obscura, of reflecting the things that are. The ancient Greek and Roman poets being found to have conducted themselves, more than any other, by this principle, the admiration of them encreased, and they, instead of the Italians, were

were chosen, to set the fashion, or as we call it, to form the taste of writing. From them, and from their mistresses nature, Prior, Addison, Pope, Swift, Parnell, and the rest of their cotemporary bards, received the leaven, and conveyed it, in their works, to the whole mass of the people. At this very day, when few men take the trouble of becoming very learned, and fewer give to the public any proofs of their poetic fire, the taste acquired by the last age in certain kinds of poetry, still continues; and the most insipid odes, that appear in the magazines, are better able to stand a critical discussion, than those that were written by the brightest wits a hundred years ago.

*Lord Modish.*

Then you esteem those magaziners to be good critics, though but paultry poets; I should think that required some learning more than you seem willing to allow them.

*Col. Freeman.*

No more, my Lord, than it requires knowledge of geometry to navigate a ship to Jamaica; which, though it arises from the deepest rules of science, is daily performed by those who never heard of Euclid, and who are not capable to go through the

easiest of his demonstrations. These arts, though it costs many ages of study to men of genius to bring them to perfection, are as far as regards a limited practice, easily communicated, by rote, to the greatest dunce. A very good pilot, who should venture to dispute upon the principles of navigation, would probably discover extreme ignorance; and the same daily happens to men of mere taste whenever they meddle with criticism: so far is good criticism from being a vulgar thing, that even the taste of the public, is still false in some kinds of poetry, particularly in tragedy; under which august title five acts of language, such as no mortal man ever spoke, seldom fails of putting the profits of three full houses into the author's pocket. A convincing proof that those who frequent the theaters judge of the elegance of a poem, as they do of the cock of a hat, and have nothing to influence them in their determination but mere taste, or a feeling of what is become by habit agreeable to them. Were they to judge by the principles of art, their decisions would be equally just in all kinds of writing.

*Lord Modish.*

I hope you don't lay this likewise to the charge of the poor Italians; for I don't think

think we have ever been much troubled with their tragedies.

*Col. Freeman.*

No, my Lord, it proceeds, I apprehend, from an influence much more powerfull and popular, the example of our own Shakespeare; though, perhaps, the French tragedians have not been wanting with their assistance.

*Lord Modish.*

This is somewhat new from you, Colonel, who used to speak with raptures of the genius of Shakespeare.

*Col. Freeman.*

It is that very genius, my Lord, which is the cause of this evil; and we may say of it as Cato says of Cæsar's virtue, *Curse on his genius, it has undone his country.* Dazled by the shining parts of such eminent personages, we are insensibly led to admire and to imitate, without distinction, every thing that belongs to them. What we cannot admire, at first, or what we even disapprove, we receive with deference, and use brings us in time to be more or less pleased with it. All with justice applaud when

Hotspur gives the contemptuous description of the courtier who came to demand his prisoners, so full of that pride and vivacity which constitute his character; but it was never yet known that the pit treated the actor with a hiss, or an off, off, off, when, in his relation of Mortimer's combat with Glendower, he says

Three times they breath'd, and three  
times did they drink,  
Upon agreement, of swift Severn's flood,  
Who then, affrighted with their bloody  
looks,  
Ran fearfully among the trembling reeds,  
And hid his crisp'd head in the hollow  
bank,  
Blood-stained with these valiant com-  
batants.

*Lord Modish.*

There are, no doubt, false thoughts to be found in Shakespeare; but as it is equally certain they do not bear any proportion to those that are just and noble, may not we reasonably suppose, that the imitation of him should be more usefull than hurtfull to our modern tragedians?

*Col.*

*Col. Freeman.*

That is a happiness, my Lord, which never yet befell the imitators of any of the great masters. To equal them in their beauties they must draw them, as they did, from the pure fountain of nature. Their faults they may acquire from them, as they acquired them from other faulty poets. Had not Shakespeare been perverted by wrong taste and imitation, he could never have produced such lines as those I have repeated. Nature could never have pointed out to him that a river was capable of cowardise, or that it was consistent with the character of a gentleman, such as Piercy, to say *the thing that was not*. It is good rules alone that can save a poet from such blunders, which taste is ever ready to lead him into.

*Lord Modish.*

Want of rules might indeed have been the cause of those errors in Shakespeare; but that is not, surely, the case with the modern tragedians, either French or English. They have had critics and rules in abundance.

*Col. Freeman.*

No doubt they have, my Lord; but such critics as are worse than none; and

such rules as serve to mislead their observers to such a degree, as to make them less fit to judge of poetry than nurses and children: rules that are drawn from the works of authors, and not from common sense, or the general feelings of mankind. Ask one of those criticks for a reason, and he gives you an authority; if you repeat your demand, it is ten to one but he fobs you off with one of those cramp words, that Lady Harriot has such a dislike to. As for instance, if you ask Bossu, or any of the rest of the Aristotelians, how the Severn came to be so hen-hearted, as to turn tail and hide itself, on the sight of Glendower's and Mortimer's bloody faces, he will tell you that it is by a figure called *profopopolia*. This it is to understand Greek. A sound-headed, tho' less learned critick, would probably have said, that it was by a figure called *nonsense*.

*Lord Modish.*

What, and do you despise the poeticks of Aristotle, which have been revered thro' so many ages?

*Col. Freeman.*

Far from it, my Lord; I look upon them as a most valuable remnant of ancient erudition;

dition; and, taking all circumstances into the account, a prodigious proof of the genius of the author. But I must own I despise those moderns, who overlooking all the new discoveries, which time, perhaps, rather than human wit, has produced for them, do still, by a most unholy bigotry, put their trust in his infallibility. What would you think, Lady Harriot, of a critick who could not conceive a dramatic entertainment to subsist, with any degree of excellence, without a perpetual accompaniment of musick?

*Lady Harriot.*

Indeed, Colonel, I should fancy that he had never seen any thing but Italian operas.

*Col. Freeman.*

Your Ladyship's guess, is not far wide of the mark; and yet, such is the sentiment of the great Greek, of whose profound knowledge you must have read such wonders in Pope, and the rest of the Belles-lettres-writers of your acquaintance. If any of our London connoisseurs were to advise Garrick to get Othello set to musick, by way of giving it more force and expreffion, it is not likely he would be any more consulted in theatrical matters. Not that I mean to detract from the real merit of Aristotle. His poetic

poetic system will ever deserve the attention of the learned, as it is founded upon the solid basis of experience; but as this was only the experience of what pleased in his age and country, it is too narrow a basis to erect so lofty a pile upon, as an art of poetry. Instead of searching into nature for some universal principle of pleasure in that art, by which he might in time form the taste of his own, and of every country, he from what happened in his time to be their taste, form'd those rules which have been transmitted to us, and received as a work of deep philosophy, and in which the whole mystery of writing was revealed.

The more we examine into facts, the more reason we shall have to be convinced, that taste ought never to be allowed to dictate in poetry; since, whenever taste happens to be good, it is only the consequence, not the cause of good writing. Judgment and rules, whose humble servant and follower taste ought to be, are alone fit to decide, whether he is right or wrong.

*Lord Modish.*

So then, good taste in poetry proceeds from good poetry, good poetry from good philosophy, and good philosophy from good government. A very curious genealogy.

*Cal.*

*Col. Freeman.*

I have never yet, my Lord, met with any thing to convince me it was not a true one. And it is worth remarking, that the Italians, having recovered but little freedom in religion and government, are still extreamly behind their neighbours, the French and English, in point of philosophy, and retain pretty much the same taste of poetry which they had two hundred years ago. Ariosto is still preferred to Tasso, and both to Homer, not only by the common run, but by those who set up for criticks amongst them. As if a poet were to be esteemed excellent, in proportion as he departs from the imitation of nature, or that the deficiency in that respect were to be compensated by a musical gingle and flowing combination of syllables.

In short, my Lord, altho' truth and falsehood, right and wrong, usefull and prejudicial, proper and improper, will ever be universally the same in themselves, and their boundaries capable of being accurately distinguished by human reason; yet the tastes, feelings, and opinions of men, concerning these things, must never be admitted as evidence of their being in themselves good or bad: As almost any two experiments may point out to us that those tastes, depending upon various tempers, accidents and habits,  
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are as numerous and various as the men, or sets of men, who are actuated by them. A variety, the less to be argued against, as it is so manifestly productive of general happiness, that we may well pronounce any society of men in an unnatural state, whenever they are deprived of the benefits arising from it. Whatever pleases, pleases; whether it be an ode of Horace, or a sermon of Whitfield; and whoever is made happy with either, he has my most hearty congratulations, and were I willing to condemn him, I should not know how to go about it. But if, not content with this toleration, he persists that one of these is in itself preferable to the other; I expect that he will lay aside his taste, and give me his reasons. Upon such like occasions it has sometimes, too often, happened that in default of reasons, force, and terror have been applied, in order to produce an uniformity in thinking, and to render the taste and opinion of the strongest catholic or universal. And then, woe! to the wretched sons of Adam!

*Lady Modish.*

My Lord, are you for drinking tea under the oak, or shall it be brought hither?

*Lord*

*Lord Modish.*

I think, my dear, it will be pleasanter out of doors this fine evening. Well, Colonel, I see this is your day; and that I am but ill prepared to be a champion for taste. But, as Patroclus says to Hector, you have not long to enjoy your triumph; for to-morrow I expect Jack Maggot. He, you know, is a great delectante, and full of taste to the brim, and I doubt not to see you brought to shame for the complication of heresies you have uttered this afternoon.

*Col. Freeman.*

My Lord, I accept the challenge, and desire only a clear stage. Allons.



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